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ABSTRACT

These 10th and 11th grade lessons plans related to the Great Depression and the novel "The Grapes of Wrath" help students to: develop research skills and strategies, such as keyword searches, for finding information; recognize and use the different voices of migrants; and understand the politics of migration and the Great Depression. By examining primary sources, including songs, newspapers, interviews, and photographs of migrant farm workers in California during the Great Depression, students create a scrapbook from the point of view of a migrant worker, providing evidence of the colloquial speech used by the migrants and the issues affecting their lives. Using "Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941" and Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information (FSA/OWI) photographs, students select photographs and use the sound recordings of voices of the migrant workers to create captions, letters, and/or songs based on these primary sources. The four lesson plans focus on: analyzing a photograph; gathering voices; analyzing issues; and putting it all together. Includes links to the FSA/OWI Photographs and the "Voices from the Dust Bowl," and lists four other electronic and print resources. (PM)

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The Learning Page... lesson plans

Figuring Somepin 'Bout the Great Depression.

By

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CS 511 410

Figuring Somepin 'Bout the Great Depression

Amy McElroy and Chris Pietsch

By examining primary sources, including songs, newspapers, interviews, and photographs of migrant farm workers in California during the Great Depression, students create a scrapbook from the point of view of a migrant worker, providing evidence of the colloquial speech used by the migrants and the issues affecting their lives. Using Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941 and FSA/OWI Photographs, 1935-1945, students select photographs and use the sound recordings of voices of the migrant workers to create captions, letters, and/or songs based on these primary sources. This lesson can be used in connection with a unit on the Great Depression, and specifically on *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Objectives

Students will:

- utilize the American Memory collections, FSA/OWI Photographs, 1935-1945, and Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941, for research;
- develop research skills and strategies, such as keyword searches, for finding information;
- recognize and use the different voices of migrants; and
- understand the politics of migration and the Great Depression.

Time Required

7-10 class days, about half in the computer lab, and half in a regular classroom setting; time out of class to complete the scrapbook.

Recommended Grade Level

10^{th} - 11^{th} grade; may be adapted to any grade-level lessons on the Great Depression.

Curriculum Fit

Ideal for a team-taught American Studies course, but may adapted to a history or English class on the Great Depression in general, or more specifically on *The Grapes of Wrath* and the Great Depression.

Resources

American Memory

- FSA/OWI Photographs, 1935-1945
- Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941

Other Electronic and Print Resources

- Ford, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. Los Angeles, California: Twentieth Century-Fox Films, Inc., 1940.
- Guthrie, Woody. *Dust Bowl Ballads*. Cambridge, Mass.: Rounder Records, 1988.
- Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. New York: Penguin Books,

1986.
- "Woody Guthrie." Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

Materials

How to Analyze a News Article
How to Analyze a Photograph
How to Analyze a Song
How to Analyze a Text
Language Examples
Scrapbook Evaluation Rubric

Procedure

Lesson One: Analyzing a Photograph (1-2 class periods)

Using FSA/OWI Photographs, 1935-1945 , students search, select, and analyze a photograph of a migrant farm worker.

Lesson Two: Gathering Voices (3 class periods)

Using the novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941, students collect migrants' quotations, illustrating different aspects of their colloquial language.

Lesson Three: Analyzing Issues (2 class periods)

Students interpret articles and editorials from newspapers to gain understanding of political issues of the Great Depression relevant to migrant farm workers.

Lesson Four: Putting It All Together (2 class periods)

Students compile a scrapbook of photographs, quotations, and notes, representing the perspective of a migrant farm worker selected in Lesson One.

Evaluation

Students' scrapbooks must contain examples of the colloquial speech of Depression-era migrant farm workers and evidence of the issues which they faced.

See the Scrapbook Evaluation Rubric.

Extension

- Small groups of students may create a skit to be inserted into the government camp portion of either the novel or film versions of *The Grapes of Wrath*; the skit should include student-created characters.

- In addition to resources used in Lesson Two demonstrating the colloquial speech of the migrant workers, lyrics from Woody Guthrie's songs may be selected to enrich the scrapbook created in Lesson Four.

- The collection Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941, includes a forty-five page scrapbook containing newspaper clippings about John Steinbeck and *The Grapes of Wrath*. Students may read these clippings to enrich their understanding of Steinbeck's writing process.

- Students may compare and contrast the Republican and Democratic party policy positions of the 1930s with those of the modern day.

- Students may develop theses explaining what their political views would have been if they had lived during the Great Depression. Would they have been Republicans, Democrats, socialists, or communists? Why would they have chosen a particular party or ideology?

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Lesson One: Analyzing a Photograph

Objectives At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- search the FSA/OWI Photographs, 1935-1945;
- understand different methods of analyzing photographs, distinguishing between objective and subjective observation; and
- select a photograph whose subject will serve as a starting point for creation of a scrapbook.

Resources FSA/OWI Photographs, 1935-1945

Materials How to Analyze a Photograph

Procedure

1. Prior to the lesson you may want to print and distribute background information on the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The online collection includes a brief explanation of the The Farm Security Administration.

2. Explain to the class that each student will choose a photograph of a migrant from the American Memory collection FSA/OWI Photographs, 1935-1945.

3. In the computer lab, introduce American Memory and FSA/OWI Photographs, 1935-1945. Model a search of the collection using the keyword *migrant* and the keyword phrase *California migrant*. Note the difference in the quantity and specificity of the material obtained with in these two searches. The phrase *California migrant* obtains the most relevant material.

4. Give students time to search the collection and narrow their interests to one or two photographs; once they have selected a photograph they should print a copy of it.

5. In the classroom, use the worksheet to demonstrate How to Analyze a Photograph.

6. Have each student complete a How to Analyze a Photograph worksheet for the selected photograph.

7. Students will save their work for use in creating the scrapbook in Lesson Four and will turn in the worksheet

How to Analyze a Photograph for assessment with the completed scrapbook.

8. Students will complete the analysis individually, but when they form groups to compile the scrapbook, they will choose a photograph from this activity.

Note: The subject of the photograph selected in the Lesson One exercise may be chosen as the subject of the scrapbook produced Lesson Four, or students may perform additional research and choose another subject for the scrapbook.

The Farm Security Administration

The Farm Security Administration (FSA) was created in the Department of Agriculture in 1937. The FSA and its predecessor, the Resettlement Administration (RA), were New Deal programs designed to assist poor farmers during the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Roy Emerson Stryker was the head of a special photographic section in the RA and FSA from 1935-1942.

During its eight-year existence, the section created the 77,000 black-and-white documentary still photographs (also at the Library of Congress) for which it is world-famous. Beginning in 1939, it also created 644 color documentary still photographs. The section's documentary project continued for one year after the unit moved to the Office of War Information in 1942.

The color photographs from the OWI period are also available in electronic form.

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How to Analyze a Photograph

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Objective Observations	Subjective Observations
Describe what you see in the photograph -- the forms, structures, and the arrangement of the various elements. Avoid personal feelings or interpretations. Your description should help	Describe your personal feelings, associations and judgments about the image. Always anchor your subjective response in something that is seen. For example: "I

someone who has not seen the image to visualize it.	see . . . and it makes me think of . . . ."

Questions: What questions does this photograph raise? What else would you need to know?

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Lesson Two: Gathering Voices

Objectives

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- navigate Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941;
- understand the distinct and various uses of colloquial language by Depression-era migrant workers;
- reflect on the differences between fictional, musical, and documentary language and how types of language have evolved; and
- utilize their created collections to construct a scrapbook giving "voice" to a selected migrant "persona."

Resources

- Guthrie, Woody. *Dust Bowl Ballads*. Cambridge, Mass.: Rounder Records, 1988.
- Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. New York: Penguin Books, 1986.
- "Woody Guthrie." Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.
- Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941.

Materials

How to Analyze a Text
Language Examples

Procedure

- Students gather examples of "voices" of migrant workers from three kinds of sources:
  - literature;
  - folk music;
  - sound recordings, and
  - other documentary evidence collected by folklorists about Depression-era migrant workers.

- Individually or in groups of three to four, students select snippets of language using any of the following three criteria. The way that the migrant workers use language is different than the speech of today. For example, the speaker:
  - uses words or phrases that we no longer use;
  - uses words or phrases we no longer use in the same way, and
  - uses sentence structure different than what we are accustomed to.

- Students are to trust their ears in identifying variations in language usage. They might wish to choose examples of language that:
    - seems to capture the feelings of the workers, and/or seems to refer to issues they think are important, and
    - is interesting, and captures the attention of the reader or listener.

Part One: *The Grapes of Wrath*

1. Assign each group of students a few chapters from *The Grapes of Wrath* to skim.

2. Students gather "voices" from the novel, using the How to Analyze a Text worksheet to make note of details. Notes on the text should include:
    - an example of a sentence or phrase;
    - the name and age of the character speaking;
    - the page number on which the sentence or phrase occurs;
    - the context in which the sentence occurs;
    - why he or she selected this sentence or phrase, and
    - the meaning of the sentence or phrase (if necessary).

See Language Examples for examples.

Part Two: Woody Guthrie's Songs

1. Give a brief introduction of Woody Guthrie. The liner notes from *Dust Bowl Ballads* provide a brief, but meaningful introduction. A biography of "Woody Guthrie." is available at the Web site of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

2. Using either audio examples from Woody Guthrie's *Dust Bowl Ballads*, or lyrics, students in their same groups note examples of language. Students should do their best to transcribe the words to reflect how they sound. Using the How to Analyze a Text worksheet, students make note of details including:
    - an example of line or words
    - the title of the song
    - the format (audio or written song lyric)
    - the topic of the song, and
    - Why he or she selected these lyrics or lines.

    See Language Examples for examples.

Part Three: Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941

1. Have the students read the background material provided online for Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941. Some of the resources available in this collection are songs, interviews with migrant workers, Camp Council Meeting minutes, court proceedings in the government camps, migrant camp newsletters, field notes, and miscellaneous audio snippets.

2. Demonstrate to the students strategies for locating different types of documentary sources in this collection. Give students time to practice searching the collection.

3. Using both audio and written sources from the Web site, students compile examples of language. Using the How to Analyze a Text worksheet students make note of details including:
    - example of language;
    - source;
    - speaker (name, age);
    - genre (song, conversation, notes);

- notes about recording, if given;
- location;
- date;
- context;
- why selected, and
- meaning (if necessary).

See Language Examples for examples.

Part Four: Compilation and Reflection

1. Within the groups students compile the various "voices" from all three sources. Students may want to organize them in a stack of index cards, or perhaps on pages of paper. They may want to organize the cards or papers by speaker or by topic. Students may use the worksheets generated from the above activities to organize their material.

2. After compiling their materials, each student writes an informal reflection focusing on the following questions:

   - When you examine the examples from fiction (*The Grapes of Wrath*) and those selected from documents, what observations can you make?

   - In what ways are the voices similar?

   - In what ways are they different?

   - In what way do you, or people you know, speak similarly to the "voices" that you selected? Give specific examples.

   - Are there ways in which your language is distinctly different than these migrants? Explain.

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How to Analyze a Text

Example of Language	
Speaker/Singer (name, age, gender, etc.)	
Genre (song, conversation, notes, etc.)	
Title/Caption	
Format (text, sound recording, lyric)	
Location (page, place)	
Date/Time Frame	
Topic	
Context	
Why Selected	
Meaning	

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Language Examples: *The Grapes of Wrath*

A. Example: "You git along. . . . This here girl's spoke for. She's a-gonna be married, an' her man's a-comin' for her."

Page:	432
Source:	"John Hardy" song
Speaker	woman
Context	Al flirts with the speaker's daughter before the dance in the government camp.
Why Selected	interesting word order, "spoke for" and "a-. . ."
Meaning	You move along . . . My daughter is engaged. She's going to be married and her fiance's coming for her.

B. Example: "I get so god daam tired jus' figgerin' how to eat."

Page:	377
Source:	
Speaker	Timothy

Context	man who helps Tom get a job digging ditches
Why Selected	emphasizes frustration, "figgerin'" repeated often in text -- shows how frustrated they get having to plot
Meaning	solutions

C. Example: "Never you mind. . . . I won't tell on you. We'll pretend like she was already broke. We'll pretend we ain't even been in here."

Page:	385
Source:	
Speaker	Ruthie Joad
Context	she is saying this to Winfield after she thinks he broke the toilet at the government camp
Why Selected	I like the use of "she" for toilet and the repetition. Sounds like when a child is reassuring another.
Meaning	

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Lesson Three: Analyzing Issues

Objectives

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- interpret articles and editorials from Depression-era newspapers in order to understand the migrants' relationship to political issues of the Great Depression;
- analyze song lyrics of the period to better understand the point of view of those who lived during the Great Depression, and
- select articles and songs appropriate to compile a scrapbook from the point of view of a migrant worker;

Resources

- Voices from the Dust Bowl Scrapbook

Materials

- How to Analyze a News Article
- How to Analyze a Song

Procedure

Preparation

1. Select and print out examples of news articles and clippings from the Voices from the Dust Bowl Scrapbook. Choose an article to use as a model in your presentation and several articles for distribution to the students.

2. Select and print out examples of the lyrics of the songs of Woody Guthrie. Choose a song to use as a model in your presentation and several others for distribution to the students.

3. Obtain a copy of the Woody Guthrie CD *Dust Bowl Ballads* for classroom listening.

Classroom Presentation

4. Model to the students the analysis of the news article that you have selected, using the How to Analyze a News Article worksheet.

5. Distribute copies of news articles to each individual student.

6. Each student analyzes a news article from the Voices from the Dust Bowl Scrapbook, using the How to Analyze a News Article worksheet.

7. Model to the students the analysis of the lyrics of the song that you have selected, using the How to Analyze a Song worksheet.

8. Distribute a copy of the lyrics of one of Woody Guthrie's songs to each individual student.

9. Each student analyzes Woody Guthrie's song lyrics, using the How to Analyze a Song worksheet.

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How to Analyze a News Article

When reading and analyzing a news article, whether on the topic of the Great Depression or any other topic, you must answer certain questions, for which you may use the space provided below:

1. What is at issue? In other words, in most news articles there is some type of conflict. Identify this issue/conflict in your own words.

2. Who are the participants on different sides of the issue/conflict? In other words, what are their names and/or organizations, and what are their different proposals in attempting to resolve the issue/conflict?

3. Where is the issue/conflict taking place?

4. When was and/or is this an issue? In other words, for how long has this been an issue?

5. Why is there an issue/conflict? In other words, why do the different sides have different ways of solving the issue/conflict? Do the different sides want to use different means of arriving at the same result, or are their goals different?

After answering these questions, you should begin to evaluate the different sides' arguments. Which side is more correct, and why? If you cannot yet give an educated response, explain what additional information you need to know, or what questions you need answered before you are able to give an educated response. Supply your answers in the space provided below and on the opposite side of this worksheet.

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How to Analyze a Song

When reading lyrics and analyzing a song, whether on the topic of the Great Depression or any other topic, you mus answer certain questions, for which you may use the space provided below:

1. What is the topic of the song? In many songs a story is being told. What is that story line? Put the story into your own words, giving specific examples from the lyrics proving that you understand the plot of the song.

2. What is the thesis or point of view of the lyricist concerning the story? What conclusion does the lyricist want you to reach after reading the lyrics? Write down proof that you understand the lyricist's thesis, explaining it in your own words.

3. What argument does the lyricist make in support of his or her thesis? Give specific examples of the ways in which the lyricist attempts to convince you of his or her position.

After answering these questions, you should begin to evaluate the argument. Is the lyricist correct, and why? If you cannot yet give an educated response, explain what additional information you need to know or what questions you need answered before you are able to give an educated response. Supply your answers in the space provided below and on the opposite side of this worksheet.

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Lesson Four: Putting It All Together

Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- create a scrapbook from a migrant's point of view, telling the migrant's story with photographs, migrant language, and documents selected from American Memory, and
- demonstrate understanding of the role of the United States Government in the lives of the Depression-era migrants and incorporate this understanding in the scrapbook product.

Resources

American Memory:

- FSA/OWI Photographs, 1935-1945
- Voices from the Dust Bowl, 1940-1941

Procedure

1. Students form small groups and compile a scrapbook of materials illustrating the perspective of the migrant selected in Lesson One.
2. Give students lab time to compile the visuals necessary for the scrapbook.
3. Give as much class time as you wish for students to create their scrapbooks.
4. The scrapbook takes the point of view of a fictional migrant character, and includes documents detailing where the migrant traveled, the details of the journey, and what life was like in the California government camp.
5. The scrapbook should include:
   - photographs with captions (selected in Lesson One), and
   - "voices" material, such as songs, letters, maps, souvenirs, and mementos (selected in Lesson Two and Lesson Three).

Evaluation

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Scrapbook Evaluation Rubric

Tells story and reflects character • explains where the migrant came from • gives details from the journey • gives details about life in the government camp	**35 points**
Uses required documents to serve a well-integrated purpose • photographs with captions • song lyrics • letters	**25 points**
Other documents used to serve a purpose are well-integrated. May include maps, souvenirs, mementos, or any other relevant ephemera	**10 points**
Presentation and polish	**10 points**
Process photograph evaluation analysis of news article analysis and of song lyrics "voice" log	**20 points**
TOTAL	**100 points**

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